

OTOLITHUS AUREUS RICHARDSON, 1846 (PISCES, SCIAENIDAE):
PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE OFFICIAL LIST OF SPECIFIC NAMES.
Z.N.(S.) 1744

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Otolithus aureus Richardson, 1846, was described from a specimen from Canton, now lost, and an unpublished illustration in the British Museum with the reference number "Icon. Reeves 234". Since the type was lost even in 1860, the date of the publication of vol. 2 of Günther's "Catalogue of Fishes", Günther recorded the name among his *species dubiae* of *Otolithus*. At that time there was no specimen in the British Museum to match "Icon. Reeves 234", but specimens have since been received although they were only recently recognized as this species (Trewavas & Yazdani, 1966). Meanwhile the species has been redescribed under three names,

Sciaena ophiceps Alcock, 1889 (Bay of Bengal)

Johnius birtwistlei Fowler, 1933 (Singapore)

Pseudosciaena acuta Tang, 1937 (Kwantung).

These are, of course, all subjective synonyms and the evidence for their synonymy is given by Trewavas & Yazdani (l.c.)

The name *O. aureus* has not been used, to my knowledge, since its listing by Günther as a *species dubia*, except by Chu, Lo & Wu (1913), who regard it as a junior synonym of *Otolithus ruber* Schneider, 1801 (wrongly, according to evidence given by Trewavas and Yazdani). Although it was properly a *nomen dubium* it would come within the definition of *nomen oblitum* in Art. 23(b). Following the taxonomic procedure accepted before 1961, Trewavas & Yazdani have established it by publishing a photograph of "icon. Reeves 234" and selecting a neotype from Hong Kong waters, very near the type locality. They have made *O. aureus* type species of a new genus. They have also given full reasons for the synonymy recorded above, with photographs of two of the syntypes of *Sciaena ophiceps*.

Strict adherence to Art. 23(b) would require the beheading of this synonymy by the removal of *O. aureus* and perhaps also of *S. ophiceps*, unless the mention of this name by Fowler in 1933 to decide (wrongly as we maintain) that it was distinct from *J. birtwistlei* is sufficient to drag it within the fifty-year limit.

No useful purpose could be served by such action. The species has received little attention. The name *acuta* has been used by Chinese authors only three times to my knowledge, and they would be less disturbed by replacing it by *aureus* than by *birtwistlei*, used only once (or *ophiceps* if this is available).

O. aureus is one of the names of the vast Indo-Pacific fauna which, as J. L. B. Smith (1964) points out, cannot be expected to be stabilized until revisions covering the whole area are carried out. Indeed all of Prof. Smith's arguments against Art. 23(b) apply in force to this case, not least the fact that a proposed restriction of 23(b) allegedly under consideration would, if adopted at a future Congress, immediately re-establish the name.

I therefore request the Commission, if necessary by the use of its plenary powers, to place the following on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology: *aureus* Richardson, 1846, as published in the binomen *Otolithus aureus*, type species of *Chrysochir* Trewavas & Yazdani, 1966 (Pisces, Sciaenidae).

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